

Reflections '90



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REFLECTIONS

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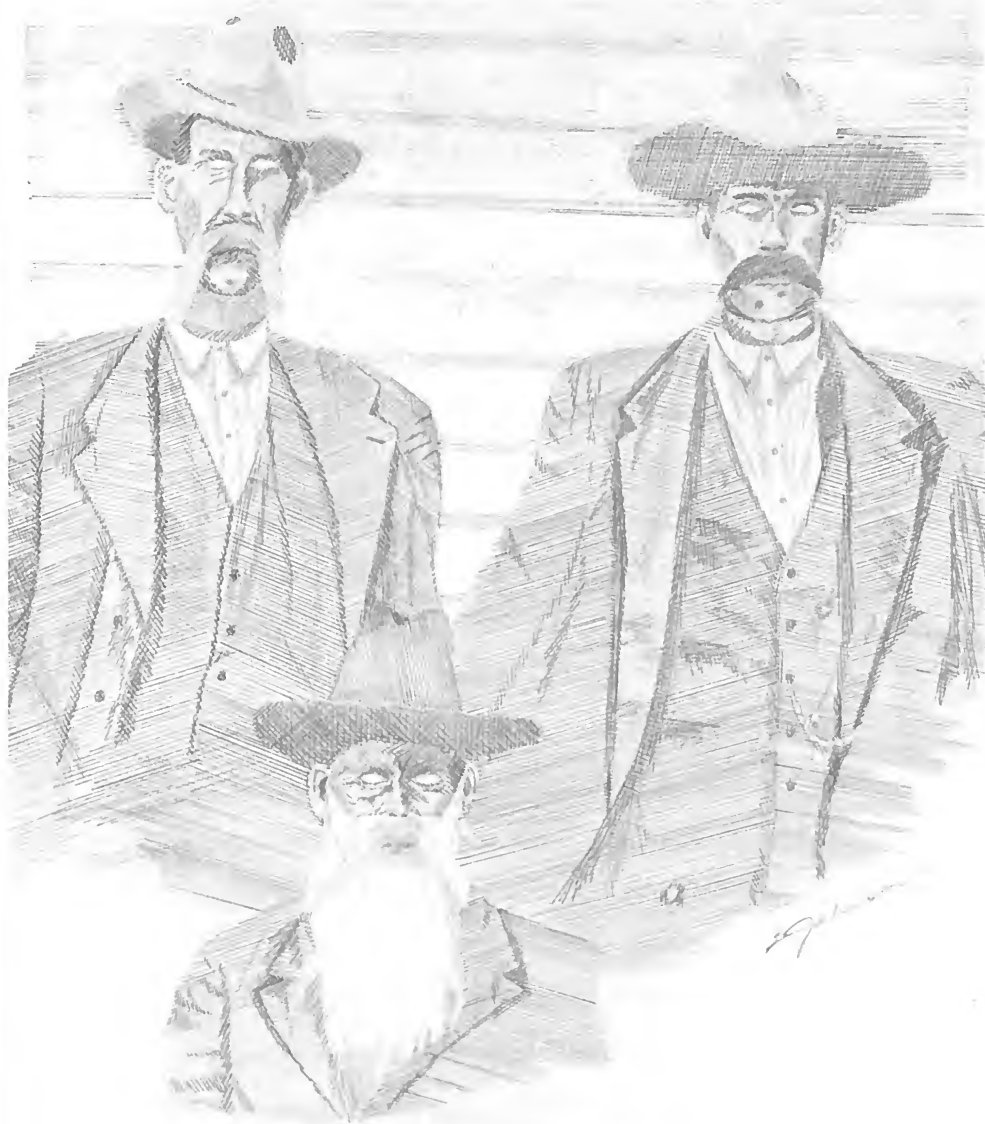
Joyce Compton Brown

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Glen Johnson	Bloodlines	Fronticepiece
Deborah Cravey	Insecticide	1
Kathy Hensen	"Sudden Consciousness"	2
Billie Dixon	Knights on a Page	3
Kathy Henson	"He had a degree..."	4
Lynn Carpenter-Keeter	"I suppose..."	5
Ernest Blankenship	Sensuality	5
Karen Martin	Tribute to Shakespeare	6
Joan Kyles	Tony	7
Angelitte Dawn Clark	Shattered Pieces	9
Craig Lewis	A Collector's Collection Complete	10
Dennis Quinn	Song Cycle, Kansas	11
Tammie Etherton	Waiting	13
James Rowe	Life	14
Alana Patricia Jones	Alan	15
Billie Dixon	Depot Street	16
Susan Bell	Oriental Diagonal	20
Chrissy Vaughn	To My Pregnant Sister	21
Dawn Elaine Camp	"Brilliant moon..."	22
Barry Martin	No Rest for the Weary	23
Joan Kyles	Time Warp	24
Peggy Joan Eichfeld	The Eagle	25
Nina Schnipper	Vacation?	26
Craig Lewis	Look at the Wall Behind You	27
Deborah Cravey	Elegy for Bette Davis	28
Billie Dixon	Christmas	29
David Hartman	Fading Memories	30
Lori Elizabeth Freeman	The Falcon	31
Ali Buie	Dear Grandma	32
Billie Dixon	Wonderland	33
Karen Martin	How to Avoid Falling in Love	37
Scott Lawlor	Invisible Existence	38
Ernest Blankenship	Portraits	39
Dawn Camp	Charlie the Cat	40
Deborah Cravey	Tarnished Gold	41
Craig Lewis	Seat of the Partially Deaf	42
Joan Kyles	Summer's Child	43

Bloodlines

Glenn Johnson (First Place)



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LITERARY CONTEST

Each year the English Department of Gardner-Webb College sponsors a literary contest for all student submissions chosen for publication in Reflections. Faculty and nonstudent submissions are not eligible for the contest. All works are judged anonymously by the final contest judges. This year's judges were Mr. Ernest Blankenship, Ms. Lynn Carpenter-Keeter, and Dr. Darlene Gravett.

AWARDS

First Place:	Insecticide	Deborah Ann Cravey
Second Place:	Depot Street	Billie Dixon
Third Place:	Time Warp	Joan Kyles

HONORABLE MENTION

Elegy for Bette Davis	Deborah Ann Cravey
"He had a degree..."	Kathy Henson
"Brilliant moon..."	Dawn Elaine Camp

Insecticide

One can always tell
Lovebug season in Florida
The grill of every
 cruising Caddy or streamlined Winnebago
Is besmeared with thumbnail-sized cadavers
Who have seized one too many carbon-monoxide-filled days.
 (And how the little monsters devour the sweet
 exhaustion the foolish call pollution!)

But, let us pause and count the wings:
Four shredded testaments to the gravity of
 Epicurean Love...
These noble beasts, who spend their short eternities
 in pursuit of sensory pleasure
Always die connected.

Then say no more of exotic birds and rare
 accountants who mate for life.
Their devotion is but a trifle to the longing
 of the Lovebug,
Who must know that Death may be the only
 thing
Lonelier than life.

Deborah Ann Cravey

Sudden consciousness
Feel the dark and the sweat on your
 hot skin.
One of those nights.

An anomaly,
Unexpected,
Unexplained.
A relatively stressless week should not
 yield such rotten fruit.

But for some unreason,
It slithers from the slime of your
 subconcience
And attacks your mind like
 a trapped animal.

But what gave it life?
And what made it rise?

Kathy Henson

Knights on a Page

Two chubby knights on a glossy page about to ascend into
the void of rolling, churning time,
that relentless robber of dimpled hands;
Thwarted only by the chain mail of a cotton sailor suit.
Armed with a splintery ball bat lance
you charge.

I would have had you wait; and slowly float to manhood,
fettered by some magic Merlin's mix;
Held back by a damsel's soft silken strands of love.
When I was ready--
You would grow, collect your steed,
And rumble roughshod over life.

But rearing, snorting, prancing,
Time's fire-breathing dragon branded life a legacy of
Galloping hours and quickened days.

And you were gone
In the shadow of childhood's paling wind--
Off to find your queen.

Billie Dixon

He had a degree,
but had escaped the ivory tower.
Everyday he spoke and taught esoterica
at the college,

but it didn't change him.

I remember sitting on his lap and
playing with his hands.

They fascinated me because they were
rougher than sandpaper
and thickly sheathed in callouses
with the dirt he'd plowed that evening
trapped under his fingernails.

And though he told me many things,
I learned the greatest truth from
simply gazing at his hands.

Kathy Henson

I suppose that once "I" reach
That powerful penacle of
Greatness, I too, will possess
The ability to attack with
Refined sarcasm, insult with
Cunning unknowing on the part of the
Attackee. And, I, then the powerful
Attacker, will insinuate ignorance
On the part of the acquaintances and
They, the attackees, will be none
The Wiser. They, the attackees,
Will never be. Or will they?

O God, I hope I never acquire
Such success.

Lynn Carpenter-Keeter

Sensuality

She was singing "Amazin' Grace"
With a lot of grace, I must say.
The notes rang out like magnetic tentacles.
I sat amazed-- soothed, stirred.
Luxurating in the femininity of that
Voice.
There was a temptation to feel guilty,
But the greater temptation was
To bask in the sensuality of the
Sound
And to call the sensation pure and
Clean.

Ernest Blankenship

Tribute to Shakespeare

Just call me Ophelia
directed by others motives.
Taking their advice and
unable to follow my own heart.

Allowing others to control my feelings
Telling me how to react
Tying a leash on my emotions
Myself unable to let them run free.

Oh, Desdemona how I envy you.
Your spirit is free
You are able to live your emotions
Standing up to those who deny you.

Although this brings your downfall
You are in control
Free to love the one you chose
Regardless of others' opinions.

Karen Martin

Tony

Children learn early how little we do to deserve pain, how easy it is to give, how hard it is to forget. I learned about pain through Tony's eyes.

My cousin Tony was a problem, or at least that's what his mother, Aunt Dorcas, and her husband, J.D., said. He was always getting into trouble. They said.

Tony was three years older than I. He, my brother Jimmy and I played together in the summer days of our childhoods. One particular morning when I was six, Tony, Jimmy and I were playing marbles in the dirt by the back porch. Grandma always saw that the dirt was swept clean. This was one of my chores, and during marble playing season I took extra care that the dirt was smooth and free of twigs and pebbles. Marbles shoot truer when the field is free of obstacles.

We sat spread-legged in the dirt, shirtless, our piles of marbles arranged in our own individualized patterns by our sides. Marble shooting was deadly business, and the stakes were high. We were absorbed in our game, unaware of everything except the click of marbles and the accuracy of our aim.

My cousin Rhonda, Tony's teenaged sister, came and sat on the back steps to watch our game. Rhonda was red-haired and freckle-faced, unlike Tony with his black, black hair and gentle blue eyes. She was her parent's joy and smugly wore the crown of favored child, taking great pride in pointing out Tony's indiscretions to Aunt Dorcas. Today was no exception, and it wasn't long before she found something to use against him: Tony had sat in the dirt in his new white shorts.

"I'm telling!" she yelled, running into the house.

Tony's eyes told the story. He knew he had done something wrong, he just didn't know what; but he knew what was to come.

"Tony!" Aunt Dorcas yelled. Tony went into the house and I followed.

Aunt Dorcas called him into my grandmother's bedroom. I stood in the doorway, watching as she lifted the belt and struck him across his back. It occurred to me then, as I watched her face, that she enjoyed this, that it was fun. There was something righteous in her face; she thought she was being a good mother, but I saw her pleasure. And I saw Tony's eyes full of confusion, pain, questions and resignation.

Aunt Dorcas and her family moved to Baltimore that summer, and our visits became once a year affairs. I didn't see much of Tony until I was twelve years old. This was the summer Tony ran away from home.

Mama didn't seem too surprised when Tony showed up on our doorstep one afternoon. I was at that awkward stage, not a little girl yet not a teenager, and was extremely shy in the presence of this duck-tailed, leather-clad walking dream. Tony still had the pale skin and sweet smile of his childhood and the questions were still in his eyes, the resignation more pronounced.

Mama quickly made a call to Baltimore to let the family know that Tony was with us. She was cautioned that he was trouble and not to take any nonsense from him. But Mama knew that Tony had never been a problem when he was with us, and he wasn't on this occasion.

I remained tongue-tied the entire two weeks he stayed with us, and though he seemed amused at my awkwardness, he never teased me or laughed at me. He blossomed, talking and laughing, helping my mother and making her smile with his teasing.

I never saw him again.

The year was 1967, and I was a radical seventeen-year-old morally opposed to everything my parents held dear. I was anti-war, anti-establishment, anti everything; my parents looked at me at times as if someone had switched daughters with them while they slept. They dispaired of ever understanding me.

That summer the call came. Tony had been killed in hand-to-hand combat in Vietnam. He had been there only two weeks. Tony was the second native of North Carolina to be killed in action; he couldn't be first even in death.

His remains were shipped back to North Carolina, his funeral to be held in my hometown. Beside his unopened casket sat a picture of Tony in his uniform, his hat shadowing his face.

I think of Tony often. I think about loss and promise left unfulfilled, of gentle blue eyed boys clutching bags of marbles in sweaty summer hands.

I think sometimes about his last moment, when he came face to face with the stranger who was to take his life. I can see the question in blue eyes filled with confusion, pain, and resignation.

Joan Kyles

Shattered Pieces

I hesitantly peer into the depths of myself,
Tragically to find a shattered heart,
Lying numb, scattered about in many pieces,
Each piece holding a different owner,
Each piece is from a different time,
With the jagged edges of the older,
Cutting fiercely away at the newer,
Yet no matter how many attempts are made,
If ever the pieces could be gathered again,
They would still not make the original whole.

Angelitte Dawn Clark

A Collector's Collection Complete

Neat it would be
If I could arrange my life
As a row of paperback editions upon a shelf,
A set of mystery novels displayed among other sets:

Arranged, in chronological order of publication;
Displayed, all the covers--a series design:
A recurring motif of a black border
And a center silhouette of a man,
For each volume a specific type of man;
And with each book set apart by its color:
One red, another blue; one green the next yellow;
A darker blue, a lighter green, ochre, vermillion...

Near the top, always an identifying logo
Encapsulating me, the main, subject character;
Below that, all titles in a distinguishing typeface:
The Straight Man, The Married Man, A Man After Midnight;
The Errand Man, The Kept Man, The Man in the Picture...
Twenty-three titles in all.

Also in repeating face, the author's nom de plume,
But his real name nonetheless noted:
Trivia known,
Folklore gathered.
A collector's collection complete.

Craig Lewis

SONG CYCLE, KANSAS

1.

The sun rose was
in Kansas, late today
and sank
golden, early,
to streaked
west.

It is getting colder now.

2.

The moon's a pale sickle
in this Kansas September sky.
Harvest is in; hay wagons
pull loads of young people,
star-eyed, excited.
Today they are kids.
Tonight they'll have memories.
Forever they'll never be the same.

3.

It won't be long
until the afternoon will turn;
length of day
depth of cold, foreboding night,
and snow birds, frozen,
will return to snow
as, mud to mud,
my father went last spring.

4.

The moon's unseen tonight.
Tonight, Kansas clouds are low.
Lightning flashes show a gray outline
of bold and then elusive silhouettes.

It promises to rain.

Tomorrow's sun will lighten puddles
and cast shadows over ruts of mud.

I will gaze at clouds
and dripping rain and birds
whose feathers seem too wet
for them to fly.

5.

It grows late.
The sun sat a long while
on the prairie tonight.
Real gold.
Sunset light
poured in the windows
and was warm.

Naked trees belie the warmth
of sunset in the prairie.
Sparrows flew free at evening.

Now cold is everywhere,
the bones of my soul ache with it,
and birds are huddled up.

I look forward to sunset
tomorrow.

6.

Yesterday it was February.

Today we worked without
our jackets.

The sun warmed
the snow.

Tonight it's cold
again.

But when the sun
went down,

There was a sound
in the air.

7.

April's summer evenings
and fall morning days
go slowly by,

changes of the
Kansas winter prairie hardly
noticed from my window.

Sublime the change;
subtle impending spring.

Dr. Dennis Quinn

Waiting

Tammie Etherton (Second Place)



Life

Life is winding, and binding.
She mangles us in her clutches
holding us captive until the end.

The more we try to understand her.
The more difficult she makes her maze.
Just when you think you have outwitted her.
Her obstacles intensify.

We struggle and fight to break free, but
the more we fight the tighter her grip,
until there is no life left at all.

Will we ever understand her?
Does she delight in the toils of the human race?
Does she chuckle at us in our strife?
No!! I think not.

She lashes us to our lowest point
only to prepare us for the unknown horizons that lie ahead.

James Rowe

Alan

From a Childhood Photo (1967-1988)

Green eyes singing
Under a grey December afternoon
A typical pose for my little brother,
Mugging for the camera;
A second transposed in an
Instant on Kodak paper.
Little secrets hide behind
A mask of smug contentment, Always
Waiting,
To steal the show with his
Forget-me-not smile.
Hinting of mischief and mystery,
Chasing fireflies on sticky summer nights;

He danced for but a short while
In summer playgrounds of swaying
daffodils and singing cicadas.

Alana Patricia Jones

Depot Street

When we turned right onto Depot Street, and past Belk's Department Store, Forest Dale Laundry, and the Coca-Cola Bottling Plant, we could see the tall, gray two-story house a block away, across the street from a belching, blackened smoke stack. One of hundreds of homes built by Cone Mills to house its workers, the house sat virtually in a hole, in the shadow of the mill. A twin structure of almost exactly the same design towered directly to the left, filled with neighbors named Bostic. My grandparents' house was a combination of Disneyland and "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," and my brother and I would have the doors flung open almost before Mama had set the handbrake on our '49 Oldsmobile. We would barge through the back porch door and catch Ma, likely as not, elbow deep in biscuit dough. She would always use a round wooden bowl to make up bread, adding flour and milk to a wad of lard, squishing it between her fingers. Then she pinched off soft fat circles of dough in perfectly equal portions. The yawning oven would accept the raw offering on a black greased metal pan and give back, thirty minutes later, brown softly crusted morsels.

We rambled around the big house with other grandchildren while grownups visited on the l-shaped wrap-around lower porch not forty feet from the railroad track. We would be assaulted by the arrival of the great train as it lumbered by on an embankment level with the second story porch, blasting us with an ear-shattering whistle, and the house would shudder with the vibration of tons of steel and locking brakes. Sometimes a segment of boxcars would be sidetracked and parked for days, and we climbed on them in curious exploration.

The massive notched iron wheels, almost as tall as us, were scary. Adults told late night horror stories of children crushed beneath grinding metal, intending to thwart our investigation of the railroad's property. But as soon as their backs were turned, we marched off through the orange tiger lilies growing at a slant on the steep bank and trudged up to the top. So persistent was our illicit affair with the train that we had shaved a path across the bank, exposing black cinder-like soil that crackled and crunched beneath our sneakered feet.

We would climb the ladder (conveniently placed, we thought) on the side of the empty cars and cavort across the tops, oblivious for the time being of giant wheels that would cut a child in half. The bravest of us dared to turn the dreaded upright wheel that had some vague connection with the coupling of cars. I was always afraid the jampering with the hitching device would cause the boxcar to skate uncontrolled back to Georgia or some other heathen place where cotton was grown to feed mills that spat out white muslin cloth.

The real trick was to time our train invasion against our Aunt Irene's supper break over in the mill, part of which she spent leaning out the upper window, either smiling and waving or shaking a threatening forefinger-- a mute "Get off that train!"

Sometimes we were sent on errands to Mr. Lytle's store where we selected purple bubble gum in addition to the prescribed food items. We then had the patient grocer, by a precisely memorized phrase, to "charge it to Alton Doggett." Other days we were allowed to follow the railroad tracks to the swimming pool. There were certain criteria to be met, though, before we were granted the privilege. First, we had to sell enough bottles to earn the 25 cent admission. This was accomplished by begging from the neighbors, searching the back alley behind Belks and promising to do household duties for weeks into the future. The Second, more important rule was that the temperature had to be, by Ma's standard, 90 degrees, before her grandchildren could be subjected to the hazard of potential "pneumony" from cold pool water. We lit many a wooden kitchen match underneath the red bulb of the long glass thermometer on the front porch to achieve the necessary mercurial requirement.

Occasionally we separated from the group and entertained ourselves. My way of having fun was to practice my music on the old black upright piano. I loved familiar, slow, old-time religion hymns, and ma loved to tell folks, "First she plays revival songs and saves their souls; then she plays funeral songs and buries 'em."

My grandmother's brother was the preacher at Missionary Methodist Church two blocks away. She dutifully sent us on two-week stints of morning Bible school classes where we learned to make baskets out of popsicle sticks. The odor of Elmer's glue and varnish stuck to my baskets for months and I could close my eyes, sniff the basket, and conjure up the memory of sweet, one-eyed uncle Dan laboring to teach us every verse of "Saviour, Like a Shepherd Lead Us." Walking home at noon, we would pass a tree, which a resident of the mill village years before had encircled with an old tire. We were too young to have any recollection of him and spent much time discussing how a tire could ever be part of a tree.

We meandered along, kicking stones or sucking the juice out of sweet smelling weeds until we found ourselves either in front of Roses' Dime Store, the Romina Theatre or Freeman's cafe. White-haired Mrs. Freeman would dip scoops of chocolate or strawberry ice cream, always a hard decision for us. Then, armed with only one napkin, we returned home via Depot Street, ice cream dripping down hands and elbows. At the Coca-Cola Bottling Plant we would stop and peer up at the man in the striped green shirt whose job it was to inspect the empty Coca-Cola bottles that wiggled and clacked along a conveyor belt on their way to be filled. Sometimes he would spin around in his wooden-backed rotating chair and wave at the five sticky faces grinning up at him, missing whatever defective bottle might slip by in the interval.

On the remainder of Depot Street we would pass the time climbing neighbors' trees or swinging on the metal guard rail that lined the street. At home we would argue about what to play, finally selecting, after much democratic voting and bribing, one of our arsenal of games: Cowboys and Indians; Capture the Flag; Marbles; Red Rover, Red Rover; Dress Up strictly for girls); Business Office (with office files and papers retrieved from

the trash bins behind town businesses); or war. The latter activity was always voted on by my oldest cousin, Jimmy, because he could, to the awe of everyone else, and equipped with only his God-given throat, sound exactly like an exploding bomb.

Sometimes we would take upon ourselves the duty of bathing Bullet, the black halfbreed cockerspaniel. We plunged him into a tin bucket of water after carefully heating one kettleful to "knock off the chill," lathered him with Sweetheart soap borrowed from the bathroom, and squirted him with the "hose pipe" to rinse. Upon release, he would run in a shower of splattering droplets underneath the house and roll around on his back, arching to and fro on the ground. Then, caked with loose, powdery dirt he would stare out at us like some canine ghost. We put the Sweetheart soap back in the high-legged bathtub, still full of black hairs and tiny grains of sand.

When darkness brought an end to our daylight games and activities, we trekked out to the shadowy sideyard. The streetlights, by some mysterious cue, sensitive to a certain degree of darkness, would flicker on automatically and turn our lips Dracula blue. We played "hide-and-go-seek" against the backdrop of the ever present whispery hum of the mill, such an all pervading sound it was seldom consciously heard in the mill village.

Summer nights were suffused with the soft fragrance of lilacs or snowball bushes, some of their delicate petals having sifted to the ground in blue and lilac patches. Sitting on the fuel oil tank, listening to crickets and waiting to be hunted and made "it," we thought the dark yard seemed eerie. But rectangles of yellow light from the house windows and the mumbly conversation of folks inside evoked a feeling of safety. We were not frightened unless someone initiated a ghostly story or witnessed the diving, spastic flight of a bat.

Monster sized horned black beetles were attracted by the street lamps, and we teased them with sticks as they lay on their hard backs, legs kicking futilely in the air. We left our fingerprints on the mammoth wings of great, fuzzy moths, for having held the creature by its two appendages between thumb and forefinger, we got butterfly dust on our hands.

Once back inside the house for the evening, having had no formal invitation to spend the night, we detoured by the homey kitchen for bedtime sandwiches or soaky, a concoction of warmed-over sweet coffee and biscuits. My grandfather, his face flickering with black and white snatches of light from T.V.'s latest episode of Boston Blackie, would settle grandchildren on his lap and "beard" their cheeks with stiff, stickly whiskers, or show us how a "horse eats corn" until our knee joints were all but dislocated. Having endured his brand of good night, we sat around in shadowy rooms, dimly lit to lower the power bill. Ma's "asthma cigarette" filled the house with the pungent smell of camphor, and we played "rhythm-a-rhythm-a-rhythm-a-ree, I see something that you don't see" until sleepy eyelids drooped and stung. Herded up the stairs, wearing Pa's borrowed undershirts for nightgowns, we bounced, giggling, into bed. The gentle summer breeze stole through open, unlocked doors and windows,

and we were finally seduced, sometimes in the middle of childish prayers,
into peaceful slumber by the droning spin of Cone Mill's lullaby.

Billie Dixon

Oriental Diagonal

Susan Bell



To My Pregnant Sister

Cascading over green plastic goblets,
Splattering golden carpets crimson,
Sweet red wine stains
Childish lips and tongues
Painting mustaches on smooth skin.

Kool-Aid turns to wine
In young imaginations.

We peered through Alice's Looking Glass,
But I never dreamed we would change.

Chrissy Vaughn

Brilliant moon,
Watch over us,
Peek always over our shoulders,
Lead us with your silent speech,
And keep us safe from dark.

The sky has two eyes.
One silently hot;
The other silently cold.
But you, O, Moon,
Make us feel the safer.

Day does not frighten us
For light is all around.
But night holds only shadows.
Yet you comfort us with your light
And watch over us--silent and cold.

Dawn Elaine Camp

No Rest for the Weary

We are the White on Black
Circles in a Square World
While Other Students can be
Found in Blankets and Dreams

We can be found in Sawdust and paint
Creating a Facade of
Glorious Surroundings and
High Class Accomodations
Reality is Painted Rags and Wood Scraps
But Such is the Magic of the Theatre

The Price We Pay
Out of Fourteen days
We Sleep Only Twenty-eight Hours
Existing From Shower-to-Caffeine Fix
I Can Conclude only One thing;

Sleep is a Luxury
We paupers of the Theatre
can Ill afford.

Barry Martin

Time Warp

I tell myself how
foolish I am.
When I was wearing
love beads,
working my way
through the

Kama Sutra
he was a youth
with prismatic voice
pedaling toward

manhood.
Yet I am vernal
in his presence,
absolved by the

benediction
of his impersonal
smile: fighting
my September

fantasies
which beckon
in a voice as
sweet as babies
laughing
in their sleep.

Joan Kyles

The Eagle

Soaring above mountains high
Far above into the sky
There is an eagle I can see
Flying fast and flying free

Soaring above mountains high and small
Acting like he hasn't any cares at all
Flying above great trees so green
Seeming watchful, sharp, and mean

Searching for his destiny in the clouds
Watching for an answer in its crowds
Searching for his destiny in the ocean
Watching for an answer in its motion

Search for your destiny, my friend
Although its a journey that may never end
Be like the eagle I can see
Flying fast and flying free

Peggy Joan Eichfeld

Vacation?

I flipped the light switch and almost drooled
as I watched those bacon strips
delicately curl amidst the oven's blaze.
Meanwhile my blueberry muffin
toasted in
its smaller oven, a pat of butter slowly
permeating it to the core.
As I watch a robin gather its
breakfast berries, I become
startled by an
annoying din.
Awakening to the fact that my
tranquility has again been
disrupted, I lean over my
bedside and pounce on my
snooze bar.
In nine more minutes I will
turn off my alarm clock
and attempt to blunder
downstairs in my robe
and slippers, and
prepare a cup of coffee before I
rush off to work in my
frostbitten car.

Nina Schnipper

Look at the Wall Behind You

Before the morning's bathroom mirror, beneath the bright glare,
 Never look to check the result of the combing of your hair.
Hurry past the many mirrors in the department stores;
 If you must look, keep your gaze below face level.
When riding a car shotgun, under the vivid sun,
 Put on imaginary blinds: Ignore the rear view at the side.

Squirm in your seat when you're one in the audience
 Listening to your voice lecture from a tape player.
Becloud your hearing as someone reads your writing aloud;
 Read everyone's words in print but your own.
As you write, compose all three drafts in one setting:
 Thus it won't be necessary to reread any one during or after.

Windows, clear water, metal, drinking glasses, eye lens:
 Look at the wall behind you, not at your reflection.

Craig Lewis

Elegy for Bette Davis

She was a cabbage.
Stewing in its juices
 Bubbling, Gurgling
 Filling the room, no,
 The House
With its delicious stench.

How she yearned to leave a taste
 in the mouths of
 Sugar-fed babies
She would allow herself to be
 chopped and mixed
 -all in the soul-wrenching
 heat-searing Quest
To be served up in the perfect cinematic dish

Left to simmer, she was
To be consumed by the stoutest of eaters
...And now, all we can say
Is no one can make cole slaw the way Mama used to.

Deborah Ann Cravey

Christmas

Carry gifts home in the broiling heat of July.
Sweating, seek a niche in which
To hide the Yuletide plunder.

Spend August sorting Visa bills spit out by
An agnostic computer:
Pay the price for the birth of Christ.

In October witness the pseudoterror of the witch hunt
And the genuine horror of the Virgin Mary,
Scary and flanked by goblins.

Watch Santa crowd the horn of plenty in the eleventh month
And wonder if the eleventh hour will not
Shower on us like the Star of Bethlehem.

See December raise its beautiful face on a world
Drowning in celebration of
Christianity's crowning glory.

Billie Dixon

Fading Memories

David Hartman (Third Place)



The Falcon

(Observations on Reality)

Soaring high above the fields
A lone falcon flies--
Climbing, climbing, ascending
To the edges of infinity.

But...
On the ground, silently,
A hunter watches,
Cruel reality, waiting until
The Exact Moment...then

The shot echoes through the
Corridors of the universe.
Imagination, a falcon's flight.
reality, imagination grounded.

Lori Elizabeth Freeman

Dear Grandma,

I know I never wrote you a thank you note
For the pearl necklace you gave me for graduation.
I'm sorry.
I just never seemed to have the time.
I would have called to thank you but
You were out of reach.

Grandma,
You meant so much in my life.
My first memories involve "helping" you bake little cakes
For me.
My early years are sprinkled with memories of
Sleeping over at your house.

Grandma,
When we moved so far away
I had no regrets at first.
I was happy to meet new friends
And see new places, but
I missed you Grandma.

Grandma,
We got a call a week before I graduated.
I'll never forget that day.
We were on vacation having fun.
You died, and
I miss you Grandma.

Thank you for the pearl necklace.

With Love,
Your Grandaughter.

Ali Buie

Wonderland

Our arrival at the Wonderland Hotel last night was relatively uneventful. Since no bellboys or elevators exist at the rustic old rooming place, we carried luggage in the pouring rain up the black wrought iron fire escape, sidestepping a skunk who was puttering around underneath. We slept soundly to the rushing lullaby of Little River, louder this weekend because of the three-day rainy spell.

This morning the smell of woodsmoke hangs in the air, probably originating at the fires of the nearby Elkmont Campground. An American flag drips rainwater in little rivulets onto the front steps, its silken folds stuck together by the downpour. Wet yellow leaves are scattered about the hotel yard. A damp raccoon who does not realize that his nocturnal ramblings should be over is still taking handouts from early risers: corn cheese, wheat crackers, Zesta saltines, dog food--he is not choosy but very fat for a wild animal.

A wedding is scheduled to take place on the long front porch today at 2 p.m. The nervous bride has already called to inquire about the status of her wedding decorations. A pair of workers from a local florist have been busy with the white arch on the far end of the veranda, transforming it from bare lattice work into a pink and green nuptial arbor. The man, dressed in a blue and orange "Tennessee" shirt (Tennessee and Auburn will wrestle the pigskin today), is resting from his decorating labors, drinking Pepsi Cola from a can while his plump female helper is still busy wrapping white netting around the porch railing.

One guest dressed in Liberty denim overalls and red checked flannel shirt stands drinking morning coffee, a newspaper tucked in his baggy back pocket. He stares off toward Blanket Mountain, apparently entertained by the clouds that play hide and seek with the view. Other people seated in the rocking chairs along the front porch are chatting. Those with long enough legs prop them up on the porch railing. The conversations vary, but one erudite lady is sharing the recently heard theory that DNA in humans is different from animals, making evolution an outdated theory. On the far end of the veranda a couple is interested only in each other as they sway gently to and fro in a swing suspended by metal chains from the wide rafters.

Behind them, sewer pipes descend from ceiling to plank floor against the wall painted shiny black to blend in with the black and white decor. The umbrella we left on the porch last night at check-in time still reposes against the mailbox post. The red flag is up, indicating mail to be picked up.

Inside the lobby a woodburned sign proclaims "We ain't fancy but we air mighty friendly." A long glass case full of candy bars and fishing lures serves as the registration desk, behind which either Darrell Huskey or his mother or brother, depending on the time of day, registers guests. (A foul-up in our reservations last night presented no real dilemma: "Well, we'll work out sump'um t'mar," Darrell assured us in Wear's Cove dialect).

In the main part of the lobby a fire is going in the fireplace, and people retreat here when the October air becomes too chilly on the porch. One group has a checker game going, with one of its members doing needlepoint while she waits to play the winner. A blue sign points "phone" in the general direction of a hastily constructed telephone booth. The black telephone is located in the corner, a directory is chained to the wall, and a wooden chair placed beside it for the convenience of the caller. Other guests sit comfortably around the warm fire on mismatched sofas and old easy chairs. The conversation has somehow centered on policemen. They hold books and magazines running the gamut in titles from Your Work to Country Living and Psalms Twenty-Third.

The fire is adopted as a community project and periodically a guest will go over, remove the black wire screen, and punch a poker into the glowing coals. The disturbed fire crackles and complains but leaps a little higher, stimulated by the poking. A small child insists that the fire is making her "burn to death" and that she has had to stroll the cool porch for relief. The grownups smile tolerantly at someone too young to enjoy the warmth and sparkle of a cheery old fashioned fireplace. The conversation has graduated to fishing: "Doug, you better have that fish fry before it gets too cold. Those fish can't stay in the freezer too long." A discussion on the cleaning and freezing of fish ensues and it is decided that the safe limit on a frozen trout is six months.

The logo from a Pepsi machine throws a neon glow into the room in distinct contrast with the cross-saw and kerosene lanterns on the fireplace mantel. Near the glass registration desk is a rack displaying "Taste of Tennessee" jellies and jams. The small jars are capped with red checked cloth and gold rimmed tight-fitting lids. A collection of photographs is displayed on a five-foot long cork bulletin board in the back of the room. Darrell has hoarded pictures of his guests for years, sticking them up haphazardly with pins and tacks. Conspicuously absent is the sound of TV or radio. A young couple utilizes the telephone, reading the directions together, deciding on the correct procedure, and the clink of their quarter momentarily breaks the quiet.

The overalled man has come in from the porch and gotten his coffee refilled in the cafe. He sips it slowly while observing the slow checker game. Another lady has taken up her sewing beside the fire and crossed her blue jeaned legs on the coffee table. The conversation has subsided except for a quiet whispery exchange between the woman with the needle and a flannel shirted friend. An older lady dressed in white sweat shirt and Reeboks fights valiantly to keep her bifocals from sliding down her nose. The backdrop of unrelenting rain is heard dripping and smacking from the second story eaves outside.

A few steps from the lobby through double wide screen doors is the restaurant. A waitress makes me a present of coffee in a thick ceramic cup, a courtesy extended by the Wonderland for any guest who needs to take his

coffee outside on the porch. Here, the only concessions to modernity are the smoke alarms and red fire extinguishers required by law. These are attached to the middle beam that runs vertically, dead center of the room. A sign handwritten in blue crayon invites guests to "please be seated." Beneath the sign is an old cider press, a woody smelling apparatus that few people would remember how to use. The clip of rain is heard against the metal guttering just outside the open window. October is not mature enough to require closed windows in spite of the fire tending going on in the lobby.

A waitress inspects the rice/salt mixture in a shaker; she shakes it experimentally to see how effective it has really been for moisture retardation. Another sets out crispy looking items in an old red piano shell that has been converted into a salad bar. Her favorite between the afternoon football rivals is emblazoned across the front of her shirt: "Tennessee." One of the few customers in the restaurant asks her when it will stop raining. "I don't know," she tells him, "but I'm about ready to start building an ark if I could gather the animals two by two." She waits on tables covered with blue checkered oil cloth, and guests are seated in cane bottomed chairs. Conversation ranges from the great "Tennessee-Auburn" battle to the deer a guest saw feeding in the front yard at dawn. A delicious oniony aroma tempts guests to try liver and onions. Pinto beans and cornbread served with onions are also popular. A purple sweated lady with artificially red hair has persuaded her husband to order the onion rings. Her rain scarf, carelessly tossed onto the old chair, is dripping rainwater onto the rough planked floor.

A bright orange quilt is draped on one wall, while fat feather stitched teddy bears with red bow ties sit waiting for the guest who will pay \$29.95 to take one of them home. There is a dampness in the room and a musty antequy smell that never goes away. Paper placemats advertise gaudy amusement park themes in Pigeon Forge-- "Dollywood" and helicopter rides-- activities that are in stark contrast to the quiet homey atmosphere of the Wonderland.

The bride has arrived with her Victorian styled wedding dress in a plastic bag, proud that her circlet of flowers and ribbon was not spoiled by the rain. She is afraid, though, that many of her friends will be unwilling to make the soggy trip from Asheville to see her wed, or worse, that the Tennessee-Auburn game will attract more attention. She sets up headquarters in a small dressing room across from the lobby, decorated with three Rembrandt reprints in plastic frames. Musicians are warming up mountain instruments for the wedding music, their chords intermingling weirdly.

Outside on the porch the decorations have dropped a little in the moist air, pink and white carnations loosening their hold on the green ivy. The groomsmen are trying to decide where more chairs are needed while one of the flower girls walks woodenly in a pink dress so as not to muss her curls. Members of the wedding party posing in front of the flowery arch are surprised by a sudden breeze that lifts their big hats and sifts a shower of

golden wet leaves into the yard. An amateur photographer, in an attempt to capture the scene from every angle, braves the afternoon mist and snaps a picture from the yard.

More cane bottom chairs are added as the crowd gathers, some even obstructing access to the canvas firehose. The pleated hose is draped on a brass bracket and stamped "Boston Fire Hose, patented August, 1924." An observation is made by one of the bridesmaids: "Looks like it's startin' to clear up." The crowd looks toward Blanket Mountain expectantly. Clouds still hug the ridge and the prediction is not as hopeful as she had made it seem. More chairs are occupied now and it seems that the bride's worry about vacant seats was in vain. A more pressing concern might be whether the racoon, or, worse, the skunk, will come back during the ceremony to beg for food.

The horseshoe pits in the front yard are flooded, with one horseshoe lying half in, half out of a mudhole. A wedding guest smokes a long brown Cigerillo held between two well manicured fingers as she tries to calm her restless child by showing her the "pretty water" in the lighted fountain out front. A relative of the nuptial pair, very pregnant and clothed in a balloon creation of pink with beige lace, nervously directs the proceedings. At 2:01, a little off schedule, the parents are seated. marching to the strains of a hammered dulcimer, the bride begins the walk down the 140 foot veranda to her groom. She is given in marriage by a man dressed in a white suit who looks like a combination of Kentucky Fried Chicken's Colonel Sanders and Mark Twain.

After the wedding festivities, we help see the newlyweds off in a shower of rice and rain. A little rest and relaxation in our room will not be inappropriate after the long day. A sign at the lobby stairs warns: "If you are over 6 ft. please watch stairway." Our room, number 26, is equipped with a queen size bed and even has a bath. Last night we shared a bathroom with the couple next door. Some rooms have only a lavatory with other facilities "nearby."

Lying in the comfort of the cozy room, we marvel that there is a place where people meet as total strangers but relax comfortably together and become friends for a rainy afternoon. When we leave tomorrow down the pot-holed gravel drive, we will take a long last look at the white square building on the hill knowing that we truly have been to Wonderland.

Billie Dixon

How to Avoid Falling in Love

Never notice the small elements of nature
Smelling the flower may awaken a memory of
A haunting scent worn by another.
Don't listen to the birds singing
The melody may be a reminder of a song sung by another.
Only associate with the rain and cold weather,
Let the snow be an icebox
in which you freeze your cold heart.
The rain hides the tears of loneliness and isolation.
Avoid contact with others.
Never reveal real feelings and emotions,
Someone may discover you are human.
Keep your eyes glued to the ground,
Eyes are windows to the soul.
Never touch another,
it could be interpreted as a caress.
Keep mute; your voice might wrap itself around another
Like a velvet covering.
The words may be a salve to a wounded heart.
Lead a solitary life and
Never discover the bliss of loving and being loved.

Karen Martin

Invisible Existence

I am a soul, a personality, a being. My existence is not noticed in the world of crowded shopping malls, bookstores, and bars. How shall it come to pass that I should allow my existence to be noticed? Now there's a question that cannot be answered.

In the crowd the people talk of the events that are significant to their lives, while I, I seem to be far away.

There's a house on a mountaintop in a little town. Is it lonely or just conducive to meditation?

The crowds sing of how God loves them. Does he also love me? Now there's a question that I know the answer to.

On the coast of a southern state, the ocean waves pound the sandy shore, while, the people listen to trendy music. At night the waves seem to be eternal, giant, and endless. Are the waves symbolic of loneliness because of their vastness?

The northern wind blows through stone walls of the palace of an old medieval king. Does he hear the wind blow? Where is his spirit now that he has given up his earthly throne?

The crowds in the park laugh, play, and tell tales around their picnic baskets. They are unified for a short time. I sit here in my room thinking of the next line to type. It will come to me. Look, it already has.

In January the crowds watch the Super Bowl hoping that their favorite team will win. It is a victory either way.

I've had my chance with love, but, I guess I threw it away. The girl sitting in my right, whoever that may be, is far away. Does she notice me?

In the distance I can hear the sound of crickets. They form a choral union with their wings.

In the shopping mall the crowds ask "How much is that item?" Does it really matter? Are the crowds really happy? Are they together, are as apart as the planets of the solar system?

I walk the cement sidewalks like a member of a nomadic tribe. The situations of the past were not any simpler than those of today. They are just more complex.

Being in the middle staircase means having to make a decision. What decision is that? a question to which I do not know the answer.

In the basement the crowd plays pool. They laugh while losing their coins
thinking that they will be regained. They take more chances.

The crowds have a common bond. If you're invisible, there is nothing you
can bond to. Who's really happy? Now there's a question that we think we
know the answer to.

Scott Lawlor

Portraits

In time it may be assumed that the son
 is the father,
But will it matter?

Two pictures in one folding frame
Sit on the top of the living room table.
Both are of young men in sailor's uniforms.
One is a boy of eighteen who has not finished
 high school-- self conscious and shy.
The other is a man of twenty-two and a college
 graduate-- confident and bold.

The younger in the picture is the father of the other.
The child-father and man-son look as if they might
 speak to each other.
If they could, what would they say?

Ernest Blankenship

Charlie the Cat

Stuffing sticking out at seams.
Dirt and age show well.
Bow tie as flat as your eyes and nose.
You look 3-D until I try
To pet you or hug you.

The youngest of two trios--
you and I.
Beth's Susie the Doll
Nathan's Chester the Clown
And my Charlie the Cat.
A grandmother's hands made you for us.
Even though we can no longer hold those hands,
We can always hold our toys.

It may seem child's play
But you helped me to adjust
To college and living alone.
I cried and you listened.
You never deserted me.

Charlie, I don't know
if I want more friends like you,
But I do know I never want to lose you.

Dawn Elaine Camp

(For Sigourney Weaver, March 29, 1989)

Seat of the Partially Deaf

There was a stage
In my life of muffled sounds,
A time when I was yet a youthful pupil,
When I had not yet arrived at hindsight,
And when there existed paths I as yet could not see--

For several occasions during that stage
I would have to pick a seat
In an auditorium
From there to "hear" a guest who would speak--

My seat was usually in the center
As close to the front as I could get
And from that seat, for the duration of the occasion,
My position would be made uncomfortable to me,
And uncomfortably clear--

The majority of the seats in the room
Were not an option for me:
They were taken by those who could hear the speaker perfectly;
I could not sit there--

To my right a group of seats were taken
By those whose world lacked the element of sound
An interpreter translated sound into signs,
But I did not know the language, so I could not sit there--

And from my personal position
I could not try what I usually tried
I was too far to read the words upon the speaker's lips--
I sat alone, although many surrounded me--

And so I shifted constantly, vainly seeking comfort
But the back was too stiff, the material too rough;
My chair had not yet become soft and worn,
Not yet a comfortable and unique seat for me --

Craig Lewis

Summer's Child

I eased through the gentle days of childhood,
brown as the sweetbuds that grew
by the back porch steps I never used,
as drunk on sunshine and laughter
as the bees that reeled and staggered
among the fallen apples; riding my rope swing skyward
poking holes in the blue with earth-dusted feet,
playing twilight games of hide-and-seek
while fireflies blinked like caution lights:
unaware that time was my playmate
calling "Ready or not, here I come"
down the lamplit streets.

Joan Kyles

